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ACTION ARA-01

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| INFO | LOG-00 | AGRE-00 | AID-01 | A-01 | CA-02 | CCO-00 | CIAE-00 |
| | SJK-01 | COME-00 | DODE-00 | DS-00 | FBO-01 | IMMC-01 | INRE-00 |
| | INR-01 | ADS-00 | MFLO-01 | MMP-01 | M-01 | NSAE-00 | NSCE-00 |
| | OCS-06 | OIS-01 | OPR-01 | PC-05 | PER-01 | PM-01 | SCT-03 |
| | SSO-00 | SS-01 | TRSE-00 | USIE-00 | VO-06 | FMP-01 | /038W |

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O 042111Z FEB 92 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8025

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 01153

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: CVIS, CMGT, PINS, VE,
SUBJECT: CARACAS CONSULAR SITREP

1. SUMMARY. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE COUP ATTEMPT WHICH STARTED AT AROUND 12:30 A.M., THE CARACAS WARDEN SYSTEM WAS ACTIVATED BY CONOFFS AT APPROXIMATELY 3:30 A.M. AS GUNFIRE CRACKLED AROUND THE EMBASSY, LESS THAN HALF A MILE AWAY FROM CITY'S LA CARLOTA AIRBASE, SITE OF AIRFORCE HEADQUARTERS. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF AMERICAN DEATHS AND ONLY ONE REPORT OF A MINOR INJURY TO ONE OF TWO AMERICANS WHO WERE IN A GROUP THAT RAN INTO CROSSFIRE BETWEEN REBELS HOLDING THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE AND LOYAL SECURITY FORCES. BOTH WERE REPORTED

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SAFE SEVERAL HOURS LATER, HAVING FOUND SAFEHAVEN IN NEARBY HOUSES. ONE WAS A WOMAN WHO SUFFERED SLIGHT SHRAPNEL WOUNDS. CONTACTS AT AMERICAN SCHOOLS, MAJOR HOTELS, CHURCHES AND GROUPS WERE NOTIFIED OF THE STILL ON-GOING FIGHTING, AND AMERICANS WERE ADVISED TO STAY INDOORS UNTIL THE SITUATION CLARIFIED. FEW AMERICANS HAVE CALLED THE CONSULAR SECTION. NONETHELESS, DESPITE GUNFIRE, A FEW VENEZUELAN MANAGED TO LINE UP FOR

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
DATE/CASE ID: 16 JUL 2008 200503656

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NONIMMIGRANT VISAS IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING A MEETING OF THE EMBASSY'S EMERGENCY ACTION COMMITTEE, THE CONSUL GENERAL IMMEDIATELY CALLED IN STAFF TO ACTIVATE THE WARDEN SYSTEM. BY 4:30 A.M. OFFICERS AND NATIONALS HAD NOTIFIED AMERICAN SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES AND HOTELS WHERE AMERICANS MIGHT BE STAYING. THE FOUR AMERICAN SCHOOLS IN VENEZUELA WERE THE FIRST TO BE CALLED. ALL DECIDED TO TAKE OUR ADVICE TO CLOSE DOWN FOR THE DAY. WARDENS AND OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS WE CONTACTED EXPRESSED LITTLE SURPRISE AT EVENTS. MOST WERE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT INFORMATION WE PROVIDED AND SAID THEY WOULD REMAIN INDOORS. A FEW EXPRESSED ALARM AND WANTED TO KNOW WHY THE EMBASSY WASN'T EVACUATING AMERICANS.

3. GUNFIRE WAS HEARD WITHIN SEVERAL BLOCKS OF THE EMBASSY AROUND 3:30 A.M. AN APARTMENT

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BUILDING THAT HOUSES SEVERAL AMERICAN FAMILIES WAS EVACUATED LATER IN THE MORNING TO THE EMBASSY CHANCERY DUE TO REPORTS OF A SNIPER ON THE BUILDING'S ROOF AND A GUNBATTLE AT AN AIRFIELD LESS THAN A MILE AWAY.

4. FOUR AMERICAN WOMEN WHO FLED A ROADBLOCK AFTER BEING STOPPED BY SECURITY FORCES AS THEY PASSED PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ' OFFICIAL RESIDENCE WERE ABLE TO FIND SAFEHAVEN AT HOUSES NEARBY. TWO WERE MISSING FOR A FEW HOURS. ONE OF THE WOMEN SUFFERED MINOR SHRAPNEL WOUNDS, ACCORDING TO ANOTHER MEMBER OF HER PARTY.

5. AMERICAN CITIZENS CALLED IN FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO SUPPLEMENT THE SPARSE INFORMATION TELEVISION AND RADIO WERE PROVIDING. [REDACTED]
REPORTED ON FIGHTING IN VALENCIA, 100 MILES WEST OF CARACAS AND PROJECTED THE FIGHTING WOULD CONTINUE INTO THE NEXT DAY. ANOTHER AMCIT CALLED FROM MARGARITA ISLAND TO SAY THAT

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ALL WAS QUIET AMONG RESIDENTS AND THE LARGELY EUROPEAN AND CANADIAN TOURISTS. MANY WERE TRYING TO FOLLOW MEXICAN CABLE TV FOR NEWS OF THE EVENTS ON THE MAINLAND.

6. CARACAS' INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN MAIQUETIA IS OPEN. FLIGHT SCHEDULES OF SOME OF THE MAJOR AIRLINES HOWEVER HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED. AMERICAN AIRLINES REPORTS THAT

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THEY HAVE CANCELLED ALL FLIGHTS OUT OF CARACAS FOR FEBRUARY 4 AND THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 5. AVENSA'S FLIGHT FROM NEW YORK TO CARACAS IS EXPECTED TO ARRIVE ON SCHEDULE EARLY THIS AFTERNOON (FEBRUARY 4). SOURCES AT UNITED AIRLINES SAY THEIR REGULAR MORNING FLIGHT DEPARTED WITHOUT INCIDENT.

7. DESPITE THE GUNFIRE AND OBVIOUS DANGER, A FEW HARDY VENEZUELAN LINED UP FOR NONIMMIGRANT VISAS. AT 5:00 A.M., CONOFF HAD TO GO OUTSIDE TO TELL A HANDFUL OF HOPEFULS THAT THE VISA BRANCH WOULD BE CLOSED.

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